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AUTHOR Bosco, James J.; Robin, Stanley S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the introduction to a symposium designed to articulate issues and problems relative to the functioning of journals. The symposium concerned itself with questions such as: Are journals useful or important in the dissemination of information among scientists? To what extent do journals constrain or stimulate the development of the discipline? Do the procedures for journal publication constrain the development of the discipline? In what ways do changing economic and social conditions jeopardize the continuation of journals? Is there a conflict between creating and perpetuating literature and financial concerns? What modifications in journals would improve their effectiveness? Those taking part in the symposium were Stanley Robin and James Bosco; Florence Levinsohn, Managing Editor of "School Review"; Stanley Elam, Editor of "Phi Delta Kappan"; and Melvin Novick of the "Journal of Educational Statistics." Lee Shulman served as discussant, providing an analysis of the problems and issues raised in the presentations. (WBC)

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Educational Journals in the Development of the Discipline: Issues and Problems. A Summary

by

James J. Bosco and Stanley S. Robin

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SUMMARY

EDUCATIONAL JOURNALS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE: ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

An essential requirement for a vital discipline of education is the production of a sound and significant literature. Such a literature will not be developed or used unless it is communicated to the members of the discipline. The flow of information to professional educators is a critical aspect in the development of a healthy, useful discipline of education. There are many formal and informal ways in which information, ideas, and research findings are communicated. Chief among the formal mechanisms of communication are journals, books, and professional meetings. Journals are of increasing importance as the literature purveying the most recent developments in the discipline. The purpose of this symposium will be to consider several critical issues and problems of professional and scholarly journals in education.

The origin of journal publication is tied to the development of scientific academies. Prior to the development of the academies much of the communication among scientists was verbal. This was augmented by the private circulation of papers. Publication occurred only when an individual had achieved a major synthesis of theory or empirical findings. Publications were in the form of a book. As individuals felt the need to communicate less definitive statements, i.e., papers on a regularized basis, journals were constituted.

In all fields - education included - the number of journals has continued to grow. The increase in the number of journals is in part a function of the reward structure within the universities. Tenure, promotion, salary increase, and career advancement are tied to journal publication. As universities begin to experience declining enrollments and consequent faculty reduction, the publication record of faculty members is, and probably will become more strongly, a factor which determines job security. It is not unlikely that the number of manuscripts submitted for publication will continue to grow. Rising rejection rates, even with journal proliferation, can be seen as rigorous scholarship or as pedantic censorship. Whether or not one cares to take such a negative stance, the situation is one which presents problems.

There is another contemporary development which presents some serious problems. Over the past few years the cost of producing a journal has risen. The problem of increased cost presents a particularly difficult situation when it combines with increased number of journals. The total cost of producing a vital literature for education rises exponentially. More and more journals compete for a market which at best will remain fairly stable and perhaps decline somewhat at a cost which is increasingly higher. For the journal contributor, unless subsidized by his institution, a result of productivity is impoverishment. The ability of institutions to support the production costs of journals declines as the number of journals in the field grows and as institutions, no longer growing, have their support curtailed.

Scholarly journals are entrepreneurial. Although their profit generating proclivities vary, there is an element of conflict, increasingly evident, in

creating and perpetuating a literature and turning a dollar. Those who run the journals must come to grips with the dilemna in a way that satisfies both publisher and contributer-consumer.

It is not unusual for professional educators, even those who write for publication, to pay little attention to the issue of the vitality and utility of journals. Even though the successes of failures of journals in providing communication among educators is an important professional matter, it is hardly ever a consideration in general forums of educators. Although there is a symbiotic relationship between the journal and the writers who furnish them with manuscripts, most individuals who use journals tend to be rather non-reflective about the performance of journals. In this symposium we will articulate issues and problems relative to the function of journals mainly from the perspective of those who have the greatest over-all responsibility for their content and continuation: the editors.

The first paper in the symposium will be "A Delineation of Critical Issues and Problems of Educational Journals," Stanley S. Robin and James J. Bosco. This paper will provide an exposition of several important issues and problems of journals. The paper will consider educational journals from the perspective of their role in the cultivation of a healthy discipline of education. This presentation will raise and elaborate a series of questions such as the following: Do the procedures for journal publication such as the restriction of multiple submission, the time lines in journal publishing, and process of refereeing articles constrain the development of the discipline? In what ways do changing economic and social conditions jeopardize the continuation of journals? What modifications in journals and the ways that they function would improve their effectiveness as a means of communication among scientists and scholars? Is change possible? What is the role of the scholar in journal change? This paper will be the stimulus to which the journal editors in the field of education will respond. Each of the three editors represents an important and distinct type of educational journal and will present under the same title: "Issues and Problems in Journal Publishing from an Editor's Point of View."

The first of the three presentations will be made by Florence Levinsohn, Managing Editor of School Review. The School Review is a journal of educational scholarship and opinion. She will discuss the journal problems in contributing to educational literature from the perspective of the development of a coherent discipline. The emphasis in this paper will be the role of the journal in in intellectual vitality of the field.

The second response will be made by Stanley Elam, editor of Phi Delta Kappan. The Phi Delta Kappan is a journal of general professional concern. He will present a paper in which the contribution of the journal to education as a profession will be discussed. The function of the journal to create the common perspectives, develop and explore the shared issues and concerns of those in education, will be emphasized. The problems of a major professional journal in an increasingly diversified profession will be treated.

The third response will be made by Melvin Novick, editor of the Journal of Educational Statistics. The Journal of Educational Statistics is a journal of research. The special requirements of a research journal, presenting

empirical information to a general and research audience will be discussed. Charges of exclusivity, dysfunctional elitism and sterility have been leveled at research journals in many fields. In this paper the very special place of the research journal, its particular problems and the desired complementarity to other journals in the field will be focused upon.

Dr. Lee Shulman will serve as the discussant. In responding to the four presentations, he will provide alternatives to problem definitions and solutions of journal publishing in relation to the needs of a body of knowledge. He will also speculate about the future of the body of educational knowledge under alternate modes of journal publication.

The impact of the proposed symposium is to articulate, from a variety of perspectives, those problems and practices of journal publication that affect the state of educational knowledge. A dialogue between contributor and editor, in a professional setting, is necessary if scholars are to be informed and have input into journal policy. Clearly, if concern for the state of knowledge and the scholarly uses of journals are not articulated then the future mode of journal publication may be dictated by mechanical and entrepreneural concerns. A symposium in this forum may begin the discussion that promotes educators as guardians of their disciplinary communications.